

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 0232

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TAGS: PFOR, GR, YO, BU, RO, TUK
SUBJECT: GREECE, THE BALKANS AND YUGOSLAVIA

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1. SUMMARY: MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN THE BALKANS SEEMS TO BE MARKING TIME. HOWEVER, GREEK-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS HAVE IMPROVED MEASUREABLY AS GREECE UNDERTAKES WHAT IT SEES AS WELCOME STEPS TO BUTTRESS YUGOSLAVIA'S THIRD WORLD INDEPENDENCE. THE GOG HAS APPARENTLY MADE PROMISES OF ASSISTANCE TO THE GOY SHOULD THE SOVIET UNION SEEK TO COMPROMISE THE LATTER'S INDEPENDENCE. GREEK PROMISES AND INTENTS TOWARDS YUGOSLAVIA SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND AS THE USG CONSIDERS THE MANY POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF THE POST-TITO ERA. END SUMMARY

2. PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS ASSERTED IN HIS NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE THAT BUILDING COOPERATION IN THE BALKANS HAD BEEN
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ONE OF HIS FIVE PRINCIPAL ACHIEVMENTS IN 1976 (REF A). HOWEVER RECEPTIVE THE GREEK PUBLIC MAY BE TO SUCH ASSERTIONS, PROGRESS ON PAN-BALKAN COOPERATION HAS BEEN HALTING AT BEST OVER THE PAST YEAR. ON THE OTHER HAND, AND MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, GREEK RELATIONS WITH YUGOSLAVIA CONTINUED TO DEVELOP DURING THE PERIOD, AND IT IS CLEAR THE GOG IS MAKING A DETERMINED EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN AND

BUTTRESS ITS RELATIONS WITH YUGOSLAVIA AS BOTH NATIONS LOOK TO THE POST-TITO PERIOD.

3. THE GOG'S CONCERN WITH THINGS BALKAN IS PERFECTLY NATURAL GIVEN THE TROUBLED HISTORY OF THIS REGION. IN FACT, THE GREEK CIVIL WAR, IN WHICH THE COMMUNISTS WERE SUPPLIED OUT OF YUGOSLAVIA, AND THE BRUTAL BULGARIAN OCCUPATION OF NORTHERN GREECE IN WORLD WAR II ARE PART OF THE LIVING MEMORY OF MANY GREEKS. THUS, THE CARAMANLIS INITIATIVE FOR GREATER BALKAN COOPERATION MADE SENSE BOTH IN DOMESTIC POLITICS AND IN FOREIGN POLICY. BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT GIVEN THE INNUMERABLE CONSTRAINTS ON THEM, THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS ADVISERS WERE UNWILLING TO INVEST VERY HEAVILY IN MAKING THE INITIATIVE SUCCEED.

4. TODAY BALKAN COOPERATION SEEMS TO BE LANGUISHING-- PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF BULGARIAN FOOT DRAGGING. THUS, BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR BELGRADE LAST WEEK FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS TOLD AMBASSADOR KUBISCH THAT ALONG WITH BILATERAL MATTERS AND CSCE ONE OF THE ITEMS OF HIS AGENDA WAS ENLISTING YUGOSLAV COOPERATION IN GETTING BALKAN COOPERATION MOVING AGAIN. SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS ACCOUNTS INDICATE THAT THE GOY RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO THIS REQUEST. PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS' STILL SECRET LETTER TO ZHIVKOV LAST WEEK PROBABLY ALSO SOUGHT TO BRING THE BULGARIAN INTO A MORE COOPERATIVE STANCE ON MULTILATERAL COOPERATION. INTERESTINGLY, THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS APPARENTLY BACKGROUNDING THE PRESS ON BULGARIA'S LACK OF COOPERATION-- INCLUDING SOFIA'S FAILURE TO SUBMIT ITS OWN PROPOSALS FOR MULTINATIONAL COOPERATION AS AGREED AT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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BALKAN CONFERENCE LAST JANUARY. (THE TURKS HAVE ALSO BEEN REMISS IN THIS REGARD.) AT THE SAME TIME, THE GOG AND EVEN CONSIDERABLE SECTORS OF THE OPPOSITION SEEM REALISTICALLY TO RECOGNIZE THAT MOSCOW AND NOT SOPHIA IS CALLING THE TUNE ON THIS NUMBER.

5. WHATEVER THE WHEEL-SPINNING ON BALKAN COOPERATION, THE PROGRESS IN RELATIONS WITH YUGOSLAVIA HAS BEEN MORE IMPRESSIVE. WHILE GREEK-YUGOSLAV TRADE IS FLOURISHING AND PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS ARE BOOMING, THE HEART OF THE MATTER IS POLITICAL; THE GREEK GOVERNMENT--AND MUCH OF THE OPPOSITION AS WELL--WANTS TO SEE YUGOSLAVIA'S COMMITMENT TO NON-ALIGNMENT MAINTAINED. CONVERSELY, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE PRO-MOSCOW COMMUNIST PARTY, GREEKS WOULD BE LOATH TO SEE A POST-TITO YUGOSLAVIA SWING BACK TO THE SOVIET CAMP.

6. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, GREECE'S POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINING YUGOSLAV INDEPENDENCE MAY BE

RATHER SMALL BUT THE GOG SEEMS DETERMINED TO MAKE IT-- AND
BITSIOS' EXCHANGE OF VISITS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
MINIC IS PART OF THIS PROCESS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THIS
POLITICAL COMMITMENT ADDS CREDIBILITY TO DEFENSE MINISTER
AVEROFF'S PROMISE TO THE YUGOSLAV DEFENSE MINISTER
LJUBICIC THAT IN TIME OF TROUBLE YUGOSLAVIA COULD
COUNT ON ANYTHING IT NEED FROM GREECE EXCEPT TROOPS
(ATHENS 10970). THAT IS A PRETTY BROAD PLEDGE, ONE WHICH
REPORTEDLY THE TWO GOVERNMENTS INTEND TO TAKE
CONCRETE STEPS TO MAKE POSSIBLE. THEREFORE, IT IS ONE WE
HOPE WILL BE KEPT IN MIND AS WE AND OUR OTHER ALLIES
CONTEMPLATE THE MANY POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF THE
POST-TITO ERA.

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